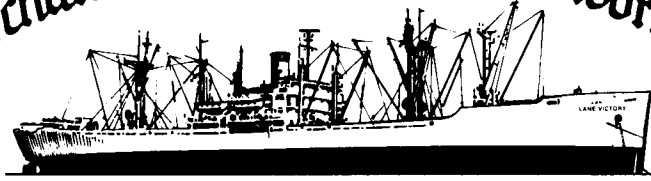


U.S. Merchant Marine Veterans World War II



*Mr. Oats
please ~~fill~~
rept letter
Sheela*

JANUARY 13, 1993

United States Department of Transportation
U.S. Maritime Administrator
Captain Warren G. Leback
400 7th Street S.W. MAR 100-Rm 7206
Washington, DC 20590

Subject: The Gallant Ship Citation

Dear Mr. Leback,

The S.S. Lane Victory served with distinction during World War II, Korean and Vietnam.

During the Korean conflict the S.S. Lane Victory was actively involved in the battles at Wonsan and Pusan.

We strongly feel that the S.S. Lane Victory should be awarded The Gallant Ship Citation. The Meredith Victory was awarded The Gallant Ship Citation for the similar action during the Chosin operation in Korea.

Proof substantiating this ship's service during this time include; (1) The Dept. of Interior Study Maritime Heritage Study. (2) Personal accounts of two officers aboard the S.S. Lane Victory, as published in "The Last Victory" by Captain Walter W Jaffee (3) The official records of the S.S. Lane Victory logs.

"During the Korean conflict the Lane Victory's moment of glory came during the evacuation of Korean civilians and United Nations personnel from Wonsan in December, 1950. As the cruiser St. Paul and the destroyers Charles S. Sperry and Zellars laid down a covering fire, the Lane Victory disembarked 3,834 troops, 1,146 vehicles, and 10,013 bulk tons of cargo, and then on December 7, 1950 embarked 7,009 Korean civilians, many of them women and children." Taken from Department of Interior, Maritime Heritage of the United States National Historical Landmarks theme study--large vessels. Quoted from Commander Malcolm W. Cagle and Commander Frank A. Manson, The Sea War in Korea (Annapolis, Maryland: United States Naval Institute, 1957) p. 184.

December 7, 1950, at Wonsan, they loaded 7,000 refugees. Ray Fullbright, Purser on the Lane Victory, was quoted as saying, "We were trying to get the refugees aboard and we were being shelled from shore side. Landing crafts were used to get refugees to the ships. With tens of thousands of people wanting to get on the few ships available the situation was chaotic. Being under attack added to the confusion". On December 8, 1950, the Lane Victory embarked 7,009 refugees but she arrived in Fusan with 7,010 refugees, one baby had been born. Quotation taken from "The Last Victory"

On December 10, 1950, they arrived at Hungnam. According to Ray Fullbright, the purser on the Lane Victory, they evacuated what was left of a Marine outfit. "We're at the dock and those ships are standing off. We take our turns coming in and combat loading. It wasn't like a planned invasion where you have all the LST boats and so on. This is an emergency, where they were moving fast to get these troops out of there."

Attached please find a copy of the study from the Dept. of Interior, pages copied from "The Last Victory" and a copy of "The News Digest" page 4 and 5, November/December 1992, an article by Captain LaRue about the Meredith Victory.

We are requesting that you investigate the S.S. Lane Victory's service during this time and advise us of the further action necessary for us to receive The Gallant Ship Citation.

We look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Sincerely,

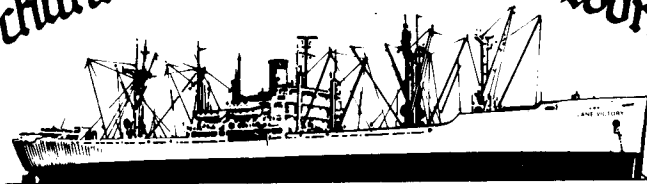


Sheila McIntyre
Publicity Chairmen

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U.S. Merchant Marine Veterans World War II



S.S. Lane Victory

February 25, 1992

Mr., Walter Oats
Office of External Affairs
US Department of Transportation
Maritime Administration
Mar 100 Rm. 7236

Dear Mr Oats,

Captain Warren Lebeck has informed us that our request for a Gallant Ship Award had been given to your department.

I am sending a packet of information for your review regarding our being awarded this honor.

At the same time I am forwarding a packet of information regarding the part the S. S. Lane Victory is playing in the 50th Anniversary of WW II and the mock celebration we hope to attend in Normandy, France.

We have been very fortunate to receive great publicity in our area, both for our ship, the part we will play in the upcoming celebration, and in addition we have gotten great publicity for Black History Month.

We are now getting publicity in national publications and local magazine, all this is creating great publicity for us and for the Normandy Celebration.

In order to participate in Normandy Invasion we must have the support to pass HR 58, giving us the initial money needed to undertake this effort. Your influence and support will be greatly appreciated.

Thank you, and please accept an open offer to come to the Lane Victory in the Los Angeles Harbor at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Sheila McIntyre
Sheila McIntyre, Publicity Chairman

Lane Victory

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)
United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

slave who had founded it. Isaac Lane died in 1937 at age 103; his granddaughter, Florence Cleaves Evans, christened the ship at her launching.

During her career, Lane Victory saw action at the end of the war in the Pacific, departing on her first voyage on June 27, 1945, under the auspices of American President Lines, under contract to the War Shipping Administration. The ship also saw action during the Korean and Vietnam conflicts, last under the Pacific Coast Transport Company. During the Korean Conflict, Lane Victory's moment of glory came during the evacuation of Korean civilians and UN personnel from Wonsan in December 1950. As the cruiser St. Paul and the destroyers Charles S. Sperry and Zellars laid down a covering fire, Lane Victory disembarked 3,834 troops, 1,146 vehicles, and 10,013 bulk tons of cargo, and then, on December 7, 1950, embarked 7,009 Korean civilians, many of them women and children. [12]

In 1970, the unmodified ship was returned to the Maritime Administration, painted, overhauled, and mothballed at the Ready Reserve Fleet on Suisun Bay, north of San Francisco, California. The ship's excellent condition and unmodified configuration attracted the attention of the Maritime Administration, which set Lane Victory aside for preservation, as the Administration also did with the last unaltered Liberty ship, Jeremiah O'Brien. The ship also became the focus of the U.S. Merchant Marine Veterans of World War II, a national organization established in Southern California in 1982. The group sought a surplus wartime emergency cargo ship as a floating memorial and active, sailing museum. After petitioning the Maritime Administration, the group was granted Lane Victory on October 18, 1987. The formal conveyance took place a year later on October 18, 1988, when President Ronald Reagan signed into law H.R. 2032 authorizing the transfer of the ship to the Merchant Marine Veterans. Lane Victory was readied for sea and on June 12, 1989, was towed from San Francisco to San Pedro. The ship is now berthed opposite Terminal Island, where she was built.

Undergoing refurbishing and being put back into fully operational shape, Lane Victory will serve as a floating, working museum dedicated to the maritime trades, as well as an educational facility. Just as important, the Merchant Marine Veterans, in their statement of purpose for the ship, have dedicated her as a "living ship memorial museum" in order to pass on to this and

MIRACLE from page 1

fore or since have combatants saved so many enemy civilians in the midst of battle. BY CAPT. LA RUE ✓

This is the account of one ship, the *SS Meredith Victory*, which symbolizes the above and beyond heroism and dedication of the sea forces during the Chosin operation. She was awarded The Gallant Ship Citation from President Eisenhower and a Presidential Unit Citation by President Syngman Rhee of the Republic of Korea.

Our director and legal officer Captain J. Robert Lunney, JAGC, USN, was an officer aboard during the action. Her master, who wrote the article for *This Week Magazine*, later quit the sea to become a Benedictine monk. His terse log entry at the completion of the epic voyage is considered a maritime classic: "Five births, no deaths, en route. Disembarked 14,005 persons safely."

I will always remember with awe and reverence the fantastic voyage we made that war-torn Christmas on the other side of the world.

I believe God sailed with us those three days. I believe this because by all the laws of logic the loss of life could have been enormous. Yet not a soul perished. Time after time, dangers that threatened to explode into disaster were miraculously averted.

Perhaps you too will find a deepened inspiration in the events of three remarkable days in the bleak winter of 1950...

It was shortly before Christmas and, under a slate-gray sky, the Chinese Communists' big guns were bombarding the port city of Hungnam on the northeast coast of Korea.

My ship, the *S.S. Meredith Victory*, was riding at anchor a few miles offshore. She was a merchant vessel, under charter to the Military Sea Transportation Service to supply our meager forces in the area. From the bridge, I trained my binoculars on the shore and saw a pitiable

***As far as my glasses
could sweep, the dock
was dark with masses
of humanity, all
caught in a giant vise.
Behind them were the
Communist Chinese
who would kill or
enslave them; before
them was the vast
open sea.***

scene.

Korean refugees thronged the docks. With them was everything they could wheel, carry or drag. Beside them, like frightened chicks, were their children.

As far as my glasses could sweep, the dock was dark with masses of humanity, all caught in a giant vise. Behind them were the Communist Chinese who would kill or enslave them; before them was the vast open sea.

Sleep was impossible that night under the constant shelling and all next day I resumed my watch from the bridge. The docks were becoming ever blacker with people. Then a message was relayed to us by a blinker signal light. It came from the naval vessel commanding our sea forces in the area and ordered me to proceed toward the dock. Close to shore, Army officers boarded us and one asked: "Can you help us evacuate the civilians?"

"Of course," I replied. "How many could you take?" he inquired. "I don't know," I answered. "Maybe a couple of thousand, if we're lucky."

Now night had fallen. Shells from our own warships in back of us screamed over our heads. We could tell that the enemy had found the range of the port. Despite the obvious risk, all our lights were switched on while we prepared to load.

In Double Danger

We were sitting ducks, perfectly outlined in the glare, yet no enemy shell struck even close. One of our own heavy guns could easily have lobbed a shell into the crush of people by mistake. Yet none did.

The incredible difficult job of loading the frightened refugees began. All dock space was taken, so we had to make fast to a Liberty Ship moored there. Hastily, our crewmen built a ramp to the Liberty, then began herding the refugees across its deck, over the rail on the opposite side and onto the *Meredith Victory*.

Both ships rocked crazily from the concussion of our own shells. Yet the refugees were going aboard safely. I saw terror on their faces as they kept their young ones close. Meekly they heeded our cries of "bali, bali!" Korean for "hurry, hurry!" One of the few words we knew in the language.

Where did we put them. We crammed them into every bit of available space. In some parts of the ship, there are three tiers of cargo holds. Into these, we jammed humanity. We put latches into the bottom-most holds by herding them onto makeshift wooden platforms and lowering them by means of winches. Then we partially sealed the holds, leaving only some air spaces. Atop the lowest holds, in the 'tween-decks cargo area, we stacked more and more people.

There were families with eight and ten children, and we took them all. There was a man with a violin, a woman with a sewing machine, a young girl with triplets. There were 17 wounded, some stretcher cases, many who were aged, hundreds of babies. They streamed aboard.

At any moment, I expected the cry: "That's all." But it never came all during that night. "It's crazy," said the second officer about dawn. "It's like that crazy joke the clowns play in the circus, where a dozen

giants get into one tiny car." Somehow, somewhere, 8,000 tons of steel were stretching to make room for all who were coming.

Finally, as the sun rode high the next morning, we had 14,000 human beings jammed aboard! It was impossible-and yet they were there. There *couldn't* be that much room-yet there was.

With this cargo of souls, we steamed out to the open sea toward Pusan on the southeast Korean coast, about 450 sea miles, or about 28 hours' journey. Ahead lay these formidable risks:

We were facing waters mined by the enemy with a vessel that had no means of detecting them or destroying them.

We knew that Communist submarines, operating in the vicinity, could easily spot us and sink us with a torpedo.

One Spark - A Fiery Finish

We realized only too well that in the No. 2 lower hold were 300 tons of highly flammable jet fuel. A spark could turn the ship into a funeral pyre.

We had no escort vessels, and no way to protect ourselves against air raids.

Yet nothing touched us during that incredible voyage toward Pusan.

That evening, a crewman elbowed his way up to the bridge and called to me: "Hey, captain! How many you figure we got on board?" A little annoyed, I snapped back: "You know the count - 14,000."

"Well, captain," he bellowed cheerfully, "it's 14,001 now!" Then he was gone. Our first baby had been born.

I cannot describe the nightmarish quality of the journey. We had no food and almost no water for the refugees - they ate only what they could bring aboard. There were no extra blankets, no clothing to warm them. Yet they behaved well.

That is, until night came. Then

We realized only too well that in the No. 2 lower hold were 300 tons of highly flammable jet fuel. A spark could turn the ship into a funeral pyre.

suddenly, with almost no warning, an ominous thing happened. A few of the younger men advanced menacingly on the crew's living quarters up on deck. They were after food - who could blame them? A riot seemed imminent. What would have happened if 14,000 persons, jammed into one small ship, had suddenly become maddened by terror? I doubt that the vessel itself could have survived. We all know how swiftly panic could spread, especially at sea. We knew, and many of us were white-faced with the dread we felt inside as we listened to the rumble of that menacing mob.

Yet the riot never occurred. Without knowing the language, the ship's officers and men somehow made the frightened and angry refugees understand that safety was now only a few hours away.

A little while later, I received another announcement: Our second baby had been born! The crew named them, using the Korean word for a popular national dish - Quam Chee. We called the first Meredith Victory Quam Chee One, the second M.V. Quam Chee Two!

Next afternoon we anchored at Pusan.

Relief? It shone on every face.

But this was not to be journey's end.

Officials came alongside. "I've got 14,000 refugees," I told them. "Where do I put them?"

I was stunned at the reply: "Not here." They gave me a variety of naval and military reasons which I suppose made sense, but could you picture our chagrin! And could you

imagine the fright of our refugees when they realized there was more of the nightmare voyage yet to come!

Fifty More Miles

"Head for the island of Koje," I was told. "It's only about fifty miles to the southwest."

Before weighing anchor, however, I was determined to get some help for my people. It took hours of slicing through red tape, but we finally managed to get food, water and some blankets and clothing from our own military supplies in Pusan. I also got a few interpreters and military police to make the last leg of the journey with us.

Suddenly the thought struck: "This is Christmas Eve." Night had come on, clear and cold. The hordes aboard ship were being helped and their fears were being calmed by the interpreters. And now something else was happening. I was astonished to see members of my crew going among the people, distributing their own extra clothing.

The message of Christmas, the message of kindness and good will, had come to this woe-laden ship, to these people aboard who, like the Holy Family many centuries before, were themselves refugees from a tyrannical force. I thought as I watched: "There was no room for them, no room in their native land."

While I ruminated, the same crewman who had made the announcement of the first birth came over to me, "Captain," he said softly, "we may be having a few more births. Maybe tonight."

I smiled back. And I knew then that, no matter what lay ahead, this ship would deliver her cargo of souls safely to port. ★



More on the SS Merideth Victory! —see "Ghost Fleet..." on page 10



8

The Korean War



Korea erupted. Suddenly the United States was again fighting a war on the other side of the Pacific. The war machine kicked into gear and took off at full throttle. The business of war with its ever-important supply lines must be kept running. At the eight National Defense Reserve Fleets across the country ships were yanked out of their mothballs, dusted off and thrown into action. Victory ships, finished almost too late for World War II, were ideal. They were fast, could unload their own cargo, and were small enough to negotiate the shallow waters and dramatic tides of Korea. From Suisun Bay came the *Lane Victory*.

Ray A. Fullbright joined the vessel as purser on October 9, 1950. "The ship was operated by American President Lines and we were the first trip out when it was brought out of mothballs."

Gil MacMillan: "I was third mate. I don't know why, but they threw me on this boat. Try to figure it out. There was a lot of deals going on there. I was trying to make a quick buck I guess. I just got off the *President Wilson* as third mate, I was senior third on the *Wilson*. They had this ship and they needed mates. There was a shortage, a war, so I went out on that. I could have had a different ship but I figured because I was only out there for a short time, let's make all we can."

After a quick shake-down, Voyage #9 commenced October 10,



Second Mate Oupe ashore in Japan. The ever-present military police could be a thorn in the side to fun seeking American seamen. Courtesy Gil MacMillan.

kimonos and dinner jackets which we don't wear and silk pajamas that I still have. Beautiful silk pajamas that are very nice. And of course the china..."

"I went out one time trying to find somebody that a friend said to look up, that she spoke English. But I don't think that he realized that it wasn't good for her to fraternize in any way with Americans. And in my attempt to find her address, I found nobody... They were all polite but nobody was helpful. I thought we were always treated with respect but not in any way friendly. Whether it was a taxicab, a bar, I don't think anybody was friendly. It was cold. You'd feel uncomfortable. The poverty that was there at the time.... You know things were tough in those days. And they were probably a little bit respectful but that was about it. Not like today I imagine, they'd be waving and smiling..."

Trouble brewed in Korea. The war was not going in a predictable manner. When the ship sailed from Yokohama on November 16, she had no cargo. She was sent north for an unknown purpose. It was like going into another world. As with all wars, it was anything but what was expected. Once more the log entries included the word "bonus." From the official logbook: "November 19, 1950 vessel crossed into area V, 100% bonus at 0640 ELT (minus 9 zone time) or 2140 GCT November 18, 1950 Lat. 32 16 N. Long 126 50 E."

Korea in winter is bitter, dank, barren and grey. The country looks almost as if there is no vegetation and never has been.

Gil MacMillan: "That's Korea. It was always cold and miserable. And it's always overcast, kind of foggy, damp and freezing. I call it the San Francisco weather with 32 degree temperature. Moist, penetrating, cold wind, freezing. The whole trip."

The *Lane Victory* arrived at Inchon on November 20.

On November 26 at 06:10 in the morning, the second electrician fell from top of #5 starboard winch while repairing it. The top of the winch is about five feet off the deck and two feet higher than the edge of the hatch. Hitting the steel hatch combing with the midsection of his body he was severely injured. Fortunately the hospital ship *Haven* was nearby. He was taken aboard for treatment.

Third Mate MacMillan: "We went to In-chon and we sat around for some time while MacArthur was going to end the war. The next thing we know we had 3000 prisoners of war being put on board the boat."

Loaded with POWs , the *Lane* sailed Inchon 12/3/50.

Gil MacMillan: "We're taking the prisoners of war from Inchon around to Pusan. I was in charge of feeding the prisoners of war. They were in the upper 'tween decks. We had barrels of rice. They gave me some military armed guards that were all shell-shocked and really wild guys. What I did, I went down in the hold with a couple of armed guards and rifles. And I had them put in blanks and we went down there and made them sit down, 'haunch,' I guess was the term in those days. Then one of these armed guards who was really a nasty son-of-a-bitch... If anybody stood up he was ordered to go over and hit them with a rifle butt. A lot of people think it's cruel, but the Koreans in those days, they whipped them with whips and that they understood. The minute you hit them and maybe knocked him out nobody would move. But if you didn't establish discipline, which happened on other boats, then there were food riots in those holds and it became dangerous.

"They could have grabbed us, you know, maybe there was a hundred-fifty or two hundred. It's almost dangerous to be down there with them. Even though I was down there in uniform and they did respect officers, they could have killed me instantly. But we maintained discipline and we did it in every single hold. The minute one person broke ranks this guy was right on top of them

A day later, December 6, she found herself at Wonsan.

On December 7, they began loading Korean civilians, many of them women and children.

Ray Fullbright: "We were assigned to evacuate Wonsan. We eventually were bringing them aboard in slings and carried people between Wonsan and Pusan. It was winter and very cold."

Gil MacMillan: "We were ordered to come in and take off a few thousand. We put on 7000 refugees. Well, you can imagine if you were skipper on that ship. What are you going to do with these people? And they keep coming. They're coming out in these LST's."

Ray Fullbright: "During the process of loading the refugees they would come aboard in slings and we would have an officer or crew member at each hatch to get them to go down the ladders into the holds. To get a count on how many we had. They would go down one end of the hatch and try to come back up the other ladder. It was dark down there and they were naturally afraid. In the process of going back and forth trying to keep them from coming back out I fell off the top of a hatch on to the deck and broke my leg which had to wait to get put back together when we reached Pusan at a MASH hospital."

Gil MacMillan: "The city is blowing up and these barges come up and they're coming along the gangway, and Olson is screaming. He's calling the command, whoever's in command. I think there's a cruiser in charge. They were bringing all these people in and once they got on these boats they don't want to go back. And they're blowing the city. You can see them blowing the whole place up. And they had dynamited and all the explosions and these people were coming on and he couldn't get them stopped."

Ray Fullbright: "We were trying to get the refugees aboard and we were being shelled from shoreside."

Gil MacMillan: "He's screaming, he's screaming at them, [Scandinavian accent] 'Hey, hoist the gangplank. Ve don't want no more. Ve don't want any more.'

"He'd hoist the gangplank and then some Army official would come by in his boat and order him to put it back down, you know... He'd tell him, 'Hey you're in charge of the army now, the army's got to be in charge.'"

Ray Fullbright: "The most frustrating thing was the Navy continually changing our orders so that from hour to hour we didn't know what to do and they would not let us leave until all the



One of the three POW's that died on the voyage from Inchon to Pusan. Courtesy Gil MacMillan.

with a rifle butt. As I say, I thought it was cruel, but I used to watch how the Koreans treat each other. They believe in physical punishment. And they respected force like that.

"Then they came by and they put food, if they had something, or they put it in their hands. They put big hunks of rice. That was all they got. I saw that everybody on the boat was fed. We fed them twice. Now there was a couple of other ships out there that had riots and then half of them didn't get fed because of those problems. But anyhow the point was everyone was fed and they were fed twice.

"I think it was two or three days from Inchon to Pusan. And I always figured that we were the only ship that didn't have any problems with feeding.

"We had three dead. I think it was malnutrition. These people had been brought down in terrible shape. It was cold. This is winter time. Most of them didn't have shoes. They were barefooted. They had khakis and some of them would stuff newspapers around them and button it up to stay warm. I just think it was lack of food and the cold. When they died we just pulled them out of the hold and put them in the guntub."

The ship arrived in Pusan on December 4, unloaded the prisoners and sailed the following day.

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At Wonsan the city was attacked and dynamited even as refugees were brought out to the ship. In this photo the smoke is so thick it blots out the sun. Courtesy Gil MacMillan.

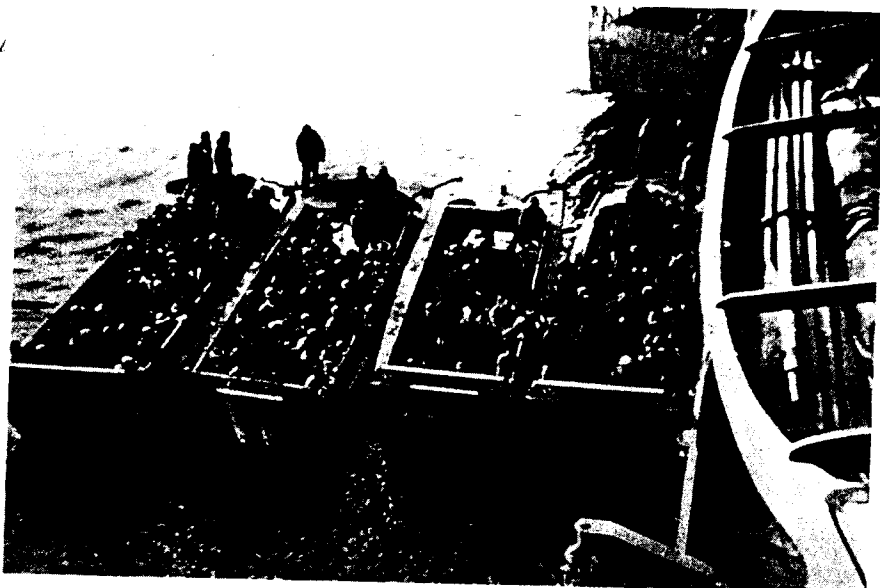


Landing craft were used to get refugees to the ships at Wonsan. With tens of thousands of people wanting to get on the few ships available the situation was chaotic. Being under attack added to the confusion. Which refugees belonged on which ship? Courtesy Ray Fullbright.

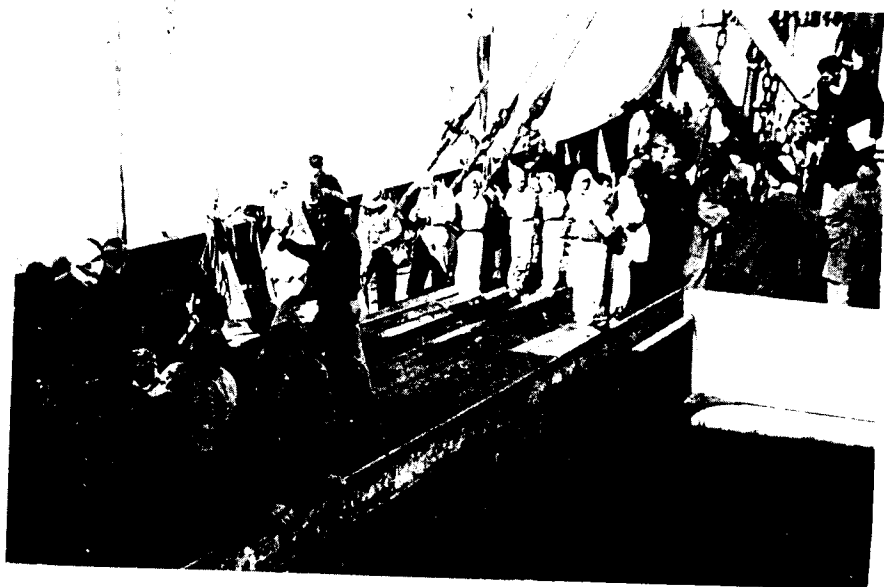
refugees were on board."

Gil MacMillan: "And poor old Olson, he's screaming 'What are we going to do vid all dese people?'"

Ray Fullbright: "Finally the skipper disregarded the orders and we sailed anyway."



Once alongside the ship, the refugees had to wait their turn getting on board. Courtesy Lane Victory.



At first the process of loading refugees was systematic. The ship's officers counted them and directed them into the cargo holds for warmth and safety. Courtesy Ray Fullbright.

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The situation got more confused. Those refugees on board, frightened of the dark cargo holds, came out the other end of the hatch. At the same time more and more boatloads came alongside seeking sanctuary. Courtesy Gil MacMillan.

Gil MacMillan: "We disarmed all the refugees coming on board. Anybody that had a weapon, we took it away and piled the weapons up.

"I also think that there was a range of wealthy people. You should see the clothes that some people wore. I'm talking about the refugees — which had to mean that they were the upper class. And they're in with the rest of them. These probably had education. They had businesses and so on and they were running from the communist system."

With her human cargo, the *Lane Victory* sailed from Wonsan on December 8. The final total embarked was 7,009 refugees. But she arrived in Pusan the following day with 7,010.

Gil MacMillan: "We had one baby, one born. When she was delivering they brought her up and put her in a stateroom. The woman's having a baby and we Americans are becoming unglued. The Koreans, when it comes time, the women that have pants, they just drop the pants and they squat down and they have the baby. And the women that are around help, and there's no big deal about it. But it seems like we had to get this woman into a private stateroom and into a bed and so on. And Korean women don't give birth to babies in bed. They squat down. Typical orien-



The decks became crowded with cold, shivering, confused people. Some exhausted, some forlorn, all seeking escape. Courtesy Lane Victory.

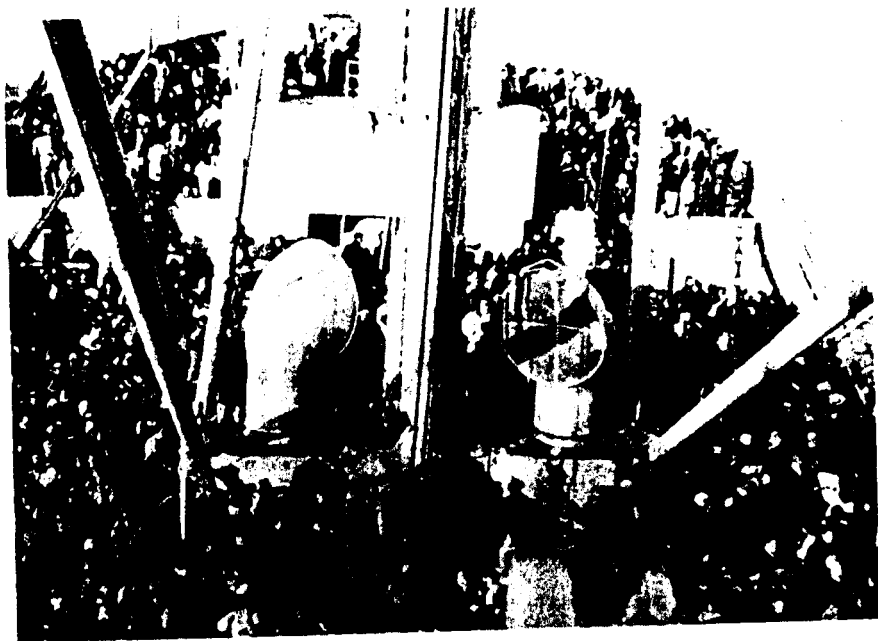


Carrying their only possessions, with the future uncertain, some refugees still managed a smile. Perhaps the future was better than what they left behind. Courtesy Gil MacMillan.

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As more and more refugees crowded aboard with their meager possessions, there became room for little else. Courtesy Gil MacMillan.



Eventually the Lane Victory carried a human cargo of more than 7,000 from Wonson — literally a sea of people. Courtesy Lane Victory.

tal. And that was the thing that I thought was funny, because here we are, the captain... Everybody's trying to get this woman into a nice American medical environment. And of course she had the baby and the next morning she's off the ship carrying the baby with her and walking off the ship, you know. It's not considered a big deal."

"I remember a few prostitutes, they were beautiful, beautiful... And we were eyeing these girls, you know. God we'd like to get some of them up in our cabin..."

Caring for more than 7,000 refugees on a freighter can be a formidable task.

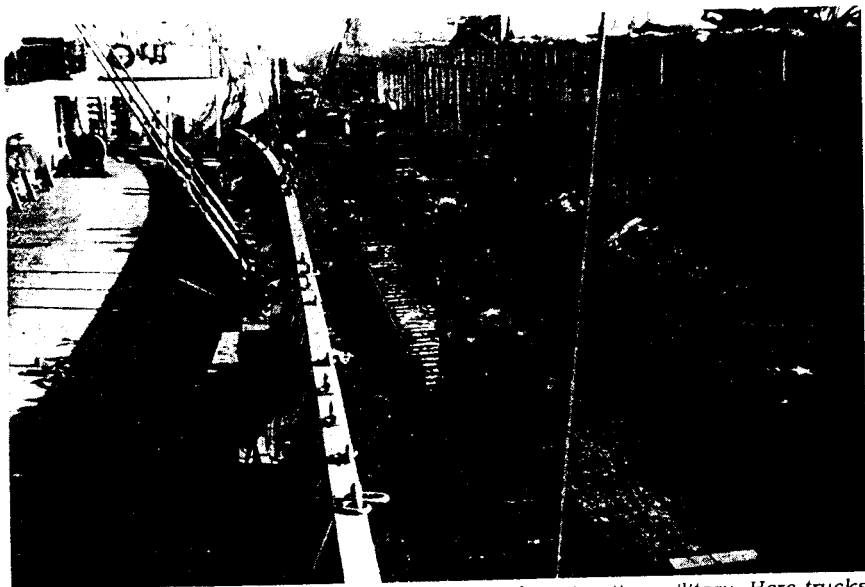
Gil MacMillan: "We put the empty rice barrels in the corner and these people, they put a plank on it. To go to the bathroom, supposedly they would crawl up on top of there and go in these barrels. Well, when they filled the barrels, those things were overflowing. Many people did that and many just went in the corners of the whole ship. By the time we got back to Pusan it was unsanitary. Unbelievable. It took us a long time. We had to get that out and the poor crew were with masks on, scooping out and then they had to steam the whole hull. It was a terrible mess, really a terrible mess."

Departing Pusan on December 10, the ship was ordered to Hungnam where she arrived on the 14th.

As the cruiser *St. Paul* and the destroyers *Charles S. Sperry* and *Zellars* laid down a covering fire, the *Lane Victory* embarked 3,834 troops, 1,146 vehicles and 10,013 bulk tons of cargo. She was one of seven merchant ships to aid in the evacuation in addition to 21 navy vessels.

Ray Fullbright: "We also evacuated a Marine outfit or what was left of it."

Gil MacMillan: "When we picked up the Army coming off the line, that was heavy cruiser fire right beside us. They were using eight inch guns and the concussion off those things... I would say a hundred yards. The army was coming off the line and they were leapfrogging down. I guess a company would come down, hold position and the next one would pass through. We on the ship could look up at the fire fight going on at the top of the hills surrounding us. When you could see the heavy fire coming from the top you know the Chinese were over the top. That's when the cruiser would start its barrage. It could lay down one hell of a barrage. All night long it was firing, heavy fire on those ridges. I

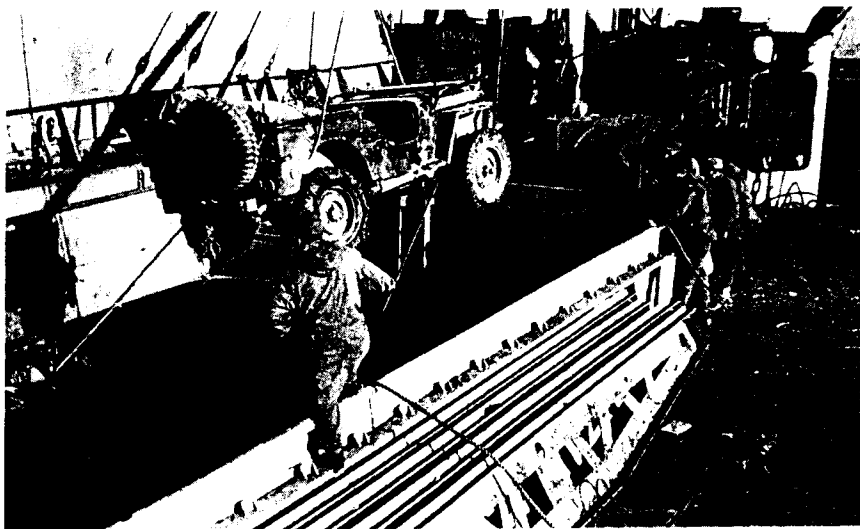


At Hungnam the Lane Victory helped evacuate the retreating military. Here trucks and equipment are lined up prior to loading on board. Courtesy Gil MacMillan.

was in the Normandy beachhead, but you don't have a cruiser right beside you, firing all night long. The concussion off of those things can shake the ship. It was just constant all night long. Then we'd see the fire fight stop and then they'd start and the cruiser would open up again. I guess they were holding the Chinese from crossing down the ridge and the Army was coming down. There was combat fire and we loaded, I don't know how many. But we loaded them and we loaded their jeeps and their ammunition carriers and their trucks. These guys were coming. I heard a sergeant reported he lost two men. And we let the officers sleep in our beds and take hot showers and eat in our mess.

"We're at the dock and those ships are standing off. We take our turns coming in and combat loading, you know. Combat reloading and then as soon as you got your load you cleared the dock. All these ships were standing by to evacuate. It was sort of an emergency situation. It wasn't like a planned invasion where you have all the LST boats and so on. This is an emergency, where they were moving fast to get these troops out of there.

"We were handling the vehicles with nets, you know tire nets. The crew was running the winches. In fact some of the officers on watch would run the winches sometimes. And the coordination of running those winches on there. You couldn't just get anybody.



Here a jeep is loaded at #3 hatch during the Hungnam evacuation. Note a wire sling used where canvas or rope belly bands might normally be used. Courtesy Gil MacMillan.

Sailing from Hungnam on December 15, the ship brought the battle-worn troops and their equipment to Pusan, arriving the same day. Then it was back to Hungnam, arriving on the 18th. The temperature dropped below freezing, the winds reached forty knots and the sea became rough.

Fullbright: "Our crew did take parkas and jackets for cold weather from the Marine supplies which were being blown up to keep the North Koreans from getting them."

MacMillan: "I know we went up to load the army and they were blowing everything up. There was a warehouse with clothes and we were allowed to go out and... We had a lot of army clothes and we got all these fancy clothes because they were torching the whole place. Fur-lined khaki stuff, like long coats. I tell you this is warm and I tell you it's cold."

The second load from Hungnam departed on December 20 and was delivered to Pusan the following day. On the 21st, the *Lane Victory* finally pointed her bow south and out of the war zone. Although it had been only a month, to the crew it seemed forever.

"The Navy at Hungnam performed with spectacular skill although they received no banner headlines for their evacuation by sea of the entire X Corps and its equipment. But to take out from unfriendly territory, 105,000 troops, 91,000 Korean

refugees, more than 17,000 vehicles and several hundred thousand tons of cargo was in itself a military triumph of no small dimensions. Equipment and supplies that could not be outloaded were destroyed on the beach, so nothing was left to the enemy."

Matthew B. Ridgeway.

The official log entry for December 23 reads, "Crossed boundary line out of bonus area at 34 N lat 129 E. Long. at 0245 (135 E. Meridian time)." That same day she arrived at Sasebo, Japan.

Gil MacMillan: "That's a Navy port. We went ashore there but that's just the grog shops. You just go ashore and sit and drink."

It was a relief just to get off the ship for a few hours. It was a short break but it was a break. The return to a quiet port had a calming effect on everyone.

Gil MacMillan: "Having prisoners of war and then having all those refugees and then the army, it was a sad environment. It wasn't a happy ship, 'cause how could you be happy with all this misery around you. Basically starvation and hardship, this stuff. We had no idea how long they were going to hold us there. I don't think anybody cared too much, but most of us never thought we were going to be gone six months. About three months, most people thought."

There followed a series of shuttle runs, ferrying troops and supplies to and from Korean ports and Sasebo.

Ray Fullbright: "The ship called at Inchon, Pusan, Wonson and Hungnam. "We were on a shuttle service between these ports of call carrying supplies. We carried general cargo at times."

Departing Sasebo on Christmas Eve, 1950, the ship returned to the war zone.

Official Log, *Lane Victory*: "December 24, 1950 Crossed boundary line entered bonus area V at 38-18 North 128-08 East at 1238, 135 East Longitude time."

Christmas Day was spent at Inchon. The steward's department went all out with turkey dinner and the usual trimmings. A bowl of nuts and hard candy was placed on each table to mark the occasion.

Gil MacMillan: "I know they sure did a great job at Christmas time and Thanksgiving."

There was some entertainment. MacMillan recalled, "They had an engineer that liked to dress up in women's clothes and

put on a Christmas program. Which, you know, by American Standards it's a little bit weird, but under British standards it's done all the time. And I think the Europeans, they do entertain themselves by putting on skits and plays of a little more cultural nature than what we have."

The ship stayed at Inchon until January 7, 1951. After a brief stop at Taechau, Korea on the 8th, she sailed out of the war zone for the final time on this voyage. Her destination was again Sasebo.

Lane Victory, Official Logbook: "January 9, 1951 passed boundary line out of 100% area V at Lat 33-15 N. 128 06 E. at 1152, 135 East long. time.

Arriving in Sasebo the same day, Captain Olson was told to stand by for further orders. From the military point of view it probably seemed like good planning. Hold the ship in reserve in case it was needed again. Who knew which way the war would go. There might be more evacuations, further invasions. One more ship held in "hot" reserve made good sense. But from the point of view of the ship itself, and the effect on the crew, it was another case of that constant problem — idle time.

By the time the ship was routed back to the States at the end of the month, the effects of nothing to do were showing.

On January 25, one of the crew went ashore although he was supposed to be on watch. At 1245, an hour after he was told to stand his watch, he was discovered ashore without permission. He was logged two days pay for being absent from his duty station. When questioned by the captain as to why he disobeyed, he refused to give a reply.

When sailing time approached, the crew had to be rounded up ashore.

Gil MacMillan: "We had some drunken crew we had to bring back in bumboats. And I know we had some pretty young AB's there. They were drinking an awful lot and there could be discipline problems. I got in a fight with one, in fact I got a hit on the face. I hated to hit a drunk, but I did and then I think the old man logged him about that. Hitting an officer. But I considered that was just a drunken kid. I saw my duty was to make sure the crew got back safe on this launch and that was when he took a swing at me. Well I hit him one back pretty hard and even when I did that I didn't know whether I was doing the right thing. Whether I had the right to strike a sailor."

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Korea — The Aftermath

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Voyage 10 commenced on February 23, 1951 in the San Francisco Bay Area with Marinus Olson remaining aboard as master. The next cargo waited in Louisiana. Sailing on February 24, 1951 the *Lane Victory* pointed her bow once more toward the Panama Canal.

Ray Fullbright left the ship in New Orleans after it arrived on March 13. "APL put me on the *President Cleveland* where I stayed for 2 years then on to the *President Monroe* for Around the World service..."

With a full load of military goods for Korea, the ship sailed from New Orleans on March 20. Stopping briefly at Los Angeles on April 3 for bunkers she then headed west. April 12, 1951 found her crossing the International Dateline at 29 degrees 14 minutes North Latitude.

Arriving in Ulson, Korea the ship discharged her cargo and began one of the most tedious voyages of her career.

On April 26 when the ship sailed from Ulson, several of the sailors were intoxicated and unable to stand their watch. More than one was logged for being AWOL and many of them were fined 1 and 2 days' pay, for various offenses. It was just the beginning.

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For weeks she shuttled between ports in Japan and Korea. Never staying more than a few days in each port, the crew felt as if they were constantly tying up and letting go. The ports and dates of departure were:

Pusan, Korea, 4/24/51; Ulson, Korea, 4/30/51; Moji, Japan, 5/3/51; Pusan, Korea, 5/5/51; Moji, Japan, 5/8/51; Pusan, Korea, 5/10/51; Moji, Japan, 5/13/51; Pusan, Korea, 5/15/51; Sasebo, Japan, 5/25/51; Pusan, Korea, 5/31/51; Yokohama, Japan, 6/14/51.

Some of them showed their frustration in true seafaring fashion. There were more loggings for drunkenness, failure to turn to and missing the ship.

The ship finally got a respite, not from war, but from shuttling. From Yokohama she sailed to Okinawa where she loaded ammunition for the Philippines.

Because the conflict was still going on, the crew received 100% bonuses for their time in the war zone. Traveling in and out of the zone so frequently made for pages of log entries. Ten days at one period, four another, here 2 days, there 3 — the total time was 27 bonus days in the zone.

While loading the explosives, one of the sailors almost blew the ship up. Whether it was carelessness, stupidity or a death wish, is not known. Most likely he was drunk. The official log entry explains what happened.

June 21, 1951 — was smoking on the open deck port forward end of #5 hatch while stevedores were loading explosives in #5 'tween deck from barge LSU 1105 made fast on port side of #5 hatch. Cautioned about smoking he threw his lighted cigarette over his shoulder into the barge. Severely reprimanded for carelessness, became abusive. There are not less than 5 "No Smoking" signs visible from his position.

From Okinawa on June 23, the *Lane* went to Subic Bay in the Philippines, where she discharged the ammo at anchorage. Sailing from Olongapo (the port for Subic Bay), Philippine Islands on June 26, it appears the ship was released from military charter. Her remaining ports of call were those typical of a ship on American President Lines' "jungle run."

The ship loaded and sailed from Manila on June 30, Saigon, (in what was then French Indo-China) on July 7, Rangoon, Burma, on July 16, Kohsichang, Siam (now Thailand) on July 23, Saigon again on July 27, Manila again on August 4 and Guam on

August 12.

The disciplinary entries for the crew on this voyage read as if they were competing to see who could get into the most trouble.

"Absent 6/28/51 without sufficient reason.

"July 23rd, FTJ (Failed To Join).

"July 26 absent from duty, failed to turn to, etc...

Manila always had a profound effect on the crew. Several men failed to join when the *Lane Victory* sailed on August 4. But one of the crew didn't want to be left behind. The day before departure, one of the sailors returned to the vessel after being in the hospital for several days. Stating that he would not stay at the hospital because he had been insulted by the doctor, he returned to work.

Crossing the International Dateline on August 17, 1951 at 1530 in Latitude 33 North, it was with hope for a better voyage in the future that the ship sailed for San Francisco. On this voyage 27 incidents of AWOL, FTJ and other disciplinary matters were entered in the official log.

The voyage terminated in San Francisco on August 24 at midnight with voyage 11 commencing one minute later.

John Mena joined the ship as third mate in August of 1951. He had just graduated from California Maritime Academy. He and Phil Laudenschlager, a classmate, got their first taste of life on a merchant ship aboard the *Lane Victory*.

Phil Laudenschlager: "We were on the list in the (Union) hall and I think the only reason we got it, we were the two on the bottom. We had just gotten out of school. And this Marinus Olson had a reputation and the rest of them didn't want it. It was one of the charter ships that was government. They were long cruises. A lot of times that wasn't so interesting to some of the older people who just wanted to go out for three months and come back."

John Mena: "The first time I ever heard of the *Lane Victory* was when I got on her. We both took off and went down to the union hall and got hired by APL who was the general agent for operating the ship with MARAD. It was a pierhead jump. We got on the ship in the middle of the night."

Phil Laudenschlager: "I signed on first. I didn't know John was going to be on there until later in the evening. It was sailing sometime late that night. As I recall it was 11 o'clock at night. So I was almost moved on when there I see John coming up with all



Junior Third Mate John Mena on board his first ship out of California Maritime Academy - voyage 11. Courtesy John Mena.

his stuff.

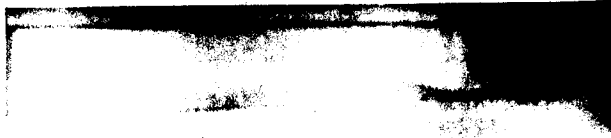
"That's why I was signed on as the third and John was signed on as the junior third. He was a little after I was, as far as signing on was concerned. He had the 8 to 12. I had the 12 to 4."

"John and I were the only ones that were under 50 I think. Almost all of them were much older."

Sailing from San Francisco on the 28th of August, John got his baptism under Marinus Olson. His first watch on his new license was something that he remembers to this day.

"The crew we had was raw. The deck hands had just got their seaman's papers. The first watch I stood, you know you come up ten or fifteen minutes before the hour. Midnight was going to be eight bells. So I was standing there and the guy goes one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine... He rang twelve bells in succession and they weren't paired off. The guys were just totally green."

Phil Laudenschlager: "I'm not so sure that they were green so much as they just hadn't sailed in a long time. They were old old sailors and they were just coming back because the jobs were available. The chief mate hadn't sailed for, I don't know, two or three years, and then he got this ship. The chief engineer, I don't think he'd sailed for a couple of years before."



John continues, "I had the watch when we left. We had no radar and the gyro compass wasn't working well so we had to use magnetic. We got to the pilot station in the fog. The pilot had gotten off and the old man brought her around to the course he wanted. Called the engine room and said, 'O.K., Hook'er up.'

"Then he said to me, 'All right Mister Mate, I'm going down and turn in. Keep her on course.'

"Then I realized he hadn't told me to blow the fog signals. Of course we were going full speed in the fog. So I said, 'The least I could do, I guess, is blow the whistle.'

"So I started blowing the whistle. The phone rang. The old man said, 'Knock it off, I can't sleep.'

"So there I was going full speed in the fog, not even sounding the signals. I was scared to death."

The trip south to the Panama Canal was relatively quiet.

Phil Laudenschlager: "We were just light, in ballast and that was a pretty uneventful trip. The old skipper wanted the hands to get out there and paint every day and all this kind of stuff. And they really weren't ready to do all that. Going to Gulfport, that wasn't too bad."

John Mena: "...went to Gulfport, Mississippi to pick up pilings, creosoted pilings, and railroad timbers and that sort of thing for Korea."

Phil Laudenschlager: "Pilings, yeah. Ties. Railroad ties was primarily in the hold and creosote pilings on deck. That was my first experience with southern stevedores. Those guys worked their tails off, boy. Most all of them were black. It took them six days to load the ship and then when we got over to Pusan it took over a month to unload it.

"It was a very typical southern town, more southern in the sense that the town itself was dry and all the way around on the city limits were all these dance halls and stuff. No drinking at all within the city limits. That was our first experience with that kind of stuff too."

With a full load on board, the *Lane Victory* departed Gulfport, Mississippi on September 18.

This trip might be called the Voyage of Groundings. Where a ship may go through her entire life without touching bottom, the *Lane Victory* grounded twice on this voyage.

John Mena: "And while we were coming out they lost the plant and we went up in the mud. That was no great problem.